



Office of the Attorney General
State of Texas

DAN MORALES
ATTORNEY GENERAL

December 19, 1995

Mr. Bob Ramirez
Escamilla & Poneck
1200 South Texas Building
603 Navarro
San Antonio, Texas 78205-1826

OR95-1484

Dear Mr. Ramirez:

On behalf of Eagle Pass Independent School District, you ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Open Records Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. You assert that the requested information is excepted from required public disclosure under section 552.107 of the Government Code. A copy of the first page of your letter to this office is enclosed for your reference. Your request was assigned ID# 30867.

The Open Records Act imposes a duty on governmental bodies seeking an open records decision pursuant to section 552.301 to submit that request to the attorney general within ten days after the governmental body's receipt of the request for information. The time limitation found in section 552.301 is an express legislative recognition of the importance of having public information produced in a timely fashion. *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.--Austin 1990, no writ). When a request for an open records decision is not made within the time period prescribed by section 552.301, the requested information is presumed to be public. See Gov't Code § 552.302. This presumption of openness can only be overcome by a compelling demonstration that the information should not be made public. See, e.g., Open Records Decision No. 150 (1977) (presumption of openness overcome by a showing that the information is made confidential by another source of law or affects third party interests).

We realize that the short time frame prescribed by section 552.301 may occasionally impose a substantial burden on governmental bodies seeking to comply with the act. Accordingly, when we receive an otherwise timely request for an open records decision that lacks some information necessary for us to make a determination, it has been our policy to give the governmental body an opportunity to complete the request.

On January 9, 1995, we asked you for copies of the records at issue, your arguments for withholding the documents, and a copy of the request for information. To date we have not received the requested materials.

The Open Records Act places on the custodian of public records the burden of establishing that records are excepted from public disclosure. Attorney General Opinion H-436 (1974). Your request for an open records decision remains incomplete. Without the information requested from you, this office is unable to evaluate the exception you raised. Consequently, we find that you have not met your burden under sections 552.301 through 552.303 of the Government Code and that the information is presumed to be public.

In the absence of a demonstration that the information is confidential by law or that other compelling reasons exist as to why the information should not be made public, you must release the information. *See also* Gov't Code § 552.352 (the distribution of confidential information is a criminal offense). *But see* Open Records Decision No. 630 (1994) (mere fact that information comes within attorney-client privilege does not constitute compelling reason for withholding information from public). For your convenience, we have attached a list of the types of confidential information that typically must be withheld from the public. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact our office.

Yours very truly,



Loretta R. DeHay
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LRD/RWP/rho

Ref.: ID# 30867

Enclosures: First page of Dec. 15, 1994 letter
Confidentiality list